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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 ANKARA 001799

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MC CONNELL, MARX, AND FARNSWORTH; ANE/AA FOR CHAMBERLAIN;
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DCHA/RMT, DCHA/OFDA, DCHA/FFP, DCHA/OTI, DCHA/DG, ANE/AA
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SUBJECT: DART: MARCH 18 NGO COORDINATION MEETING IN ANKARA

REF: ANKARA 1380

Classified by DART for Reasons 1.5(B) and (D).

This cable was draft by Disaster Assistance Response Team
(DART) Field Office/North and cleared by Embassy Ankara.

Summary

1. (C) On March 18, DART Field Office/North facilitated the first coordination meeting among Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), the United Nations (U.N.), and USG humanitarian personnel in Ankara, Turkey. Representatives from ten NGOs were in attendance, namely: Mercy Corps International (MCI), Action Against Hunger/France (ACF), International Medical Corps (IMC), Oxfam/UK, Northwest Medical Team (NWMT), American Red Cross (AmRC), World Relief, CARE International, International Rescue Committee (IRC), and Save the Children/US (SCF/US). U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) officials were in attendance on behalf of the U.N. Four DART Field Office/North members and the Embassy MDRO took part in the coordination meeting on behalf of the USG.

2. (C) The two-hour meeting covered overall humanitarian coordination issues, the reluctance of the U.N. to facilitate future meetings, and an opportunity for NGOs to outline the steps they have taken to register with the Government of Turkey (GOT), as well as provide information on the sectors that they are focusing on. NGOs expressed the need to continue these coordination meetings on a regular basis, and DART Field Office/North will facilitate a second coordination meeting the morning of March 22. Additionally, the NGO community expressed the desire to meet with U.S. military personnel to discuss the dissemination of information on security issues. NGOs are also seeking information on organizations that will respond to a potential Chemical or Biological attack on civilian populations.

U.N. Reluctance to Coordinate NGO Meetings

3. (C) UN OCHA is willing to track the transit and registration process and lobby on behalf on NGOs with the GOT Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). However, UN OCHA indicated that they are unable, at this time, to coordinate any meetings with unregistered NGOs because the GOT insists that only registered NGOs participate in U.N. facilitated coordination meetings. UN OCHA stressed they are willing to continue to be an observer at future NGO coordination discussions. Several NGOs voiced concern over the U.N.'s reluctance to host future NGO coordination meetings, and UNHCR and UN OCHA indicated that they would take the issue up with the U.N. Resident Coordinator. DART Field Office/North urged U.N. representatives to host NGO coordination meetings for issued related to humanitarian assistance in northern Iraq.

Current Registration Process

14. (U) Based on information provided by NGOs during the coordination meeting, NGOs, in addition to applying for a transit permit and registration license, must now submit a request to the MFA for a crisis permit as well. NGOs voiced frustration that the process for providing humanitarian assistance now requires three separate applications; transit, registration, and crisis permits. NGOs asked if UN OCHA could provide guidance to all organizations seeking to register with the GOT. UN OCHA is discussing the matter internally and will provide an update at the next coordination meeting.

Update on the NGO Registration Process

15. (U) Each NGO presented a brief overview of the status of their registration with the MFA, as well as some indication of the area and/or sectors that they are focusing on:

1A. International Rescue Committee) IRC submitted both their transit permit and registration documents to the MFA on March 10. They are looking at providing assistance to northern Iraq, with a focus on primary health, children,s issues, and water and sanitation.

1B. International Medical Corps) IMC submitted both a transit and registration application to the MFA on March 12. They would like to focus on primary health care and health education in northern Iraq.

1C. Mercy Corps International) MCI just arrived in Ankara and is working to draft transit and registration materials to submit to the MFA. MCI indicated that they have a strong working relationship with Peace Winds/Japan, an international NGO currently working in northern Iraq.

1D. Action Against Hunger) ACF has no plans to establish an office or transit goods through Turkey. ACF sent a representative to Ankara in case of a refugee crisis within Turkey and they will focus on nutrition if such a crisis presents itself.

1E. Oxfam/UK) Oxfam/UK is in discussions with UNHCR to provide emergency water and sanitation services in refugee camps on the Turkish side of the border. If the Turkish military plans on crossing the border, Oxfam/UK made it very clear that they will not apply for a transit permit with the MFA.

1F. Northwest Medical Team) NWMT applied for a transit permit on March 18 and will focus on primary health concerns beyond any potential Turkish buffer zone in northern Iraq.

1G. American Red Cross) AmRC has had a relationship with the Turkish Red Crescent for three years and is in a position to provide technical assistance to the Red Crescent if needed.

1H. World Relief) World Relief is submit their registration documents with the MFA, but has yet to do so. They are not looking at transiting goods through Turkey, but intend to establish an office to provide technical assistance to local NGOs.

1I. CARE International) CARE arrived in Ankara on March 16 and is looking into the possibility of obtaining both a transit permit and registration license.

Future Coordination Meetings

16. (C) NGOs expressed the need to continue coordination meetings on a regular basis. Due to the U.N.,s reluctance to facilitate meetings with unregistered organizations, DART Field Office/North will facilitate a second coordination meeting on March 22. Additionally, the NGO community expressed the desire to meet with U.S. Military personnel on March 22 to discuss the dissemination of information on security issues. NGOs are also seeking information on organizations that will respond to a potential CBRNE attack on civilian populations. DART Field Office/North is attempting to arrange for U.S. military personnel to meet with NGOs and is seeking guidance from OFDA/Washington on Chemical and Biological response concerns through separate channels.

